

2004 Wisconsin Lao-Hmong Resettlement Summary

Estimated Refugee Resettlement Demographic Information

The State Department has announced plans to admit to the U.S. approximately 15,000 Lao-Hmong refugees who have been living for many years in a compound on the grounds of a Buddhist Temple in Thailand. As the State Department will generally resettle refugees where they have relatives, Wisconsin may receive up to 3,000 Lao-Hmong refugees during the estimated time period from July 2004-December 2004. The number of refugees anticipated to relocate to Wisconsin in 2004 is a significant increase in resettlement numbers compared to the 2001-2003 time period, but is consistent with the average annual flow through most of the 1990s. The age ranges of this refugee population located at the Thailand site:

Age 0-3=3,040 Age 4-18=6,129 Age 19-44=4,200 Age 45-64=1,320 Above 64=587

Geographical County refugee resettlement estimates are also provided in this table:

2004 Estimated Hmong Refugee Arrivals to Wisconsin (Updated 06/17/2004)

County	Hmong Population	Interest Letters New Arrivals (Individuals)	Interest Letters New Arrivals (Cases)
Brown	3,893	277	45
Dane	4,900	183	30
Dunn	1,287	77	13
Eau Claire	2,959	103	14
La Crosse	3,491	280	37
Manitowoc	1,889	165	27
Marathon	4,712	448	75
Milwaukee	9,835	1164	174
Outagamie	4,260	297	38
Portage	950	81	20
Sheboygan	4,233	173	31
Winnebago	2,072	122	20
Wood	787	84	13
TOTAL	45,268	3,454	537

Hmong refugees in Thailand are currently being interviewed to determine who is interested and eligible to resettle in the United States. All will undergo health screening and security screenings prior to admission. It will not be known how many will be resettled until these interviews and screenings are completed. It is expected that most of these refugees will join relatives already in the United States. Some further information on the Hmong population at the temple site in Thailand can be found at <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/thailand/index.asp>

Best Refugee Employment Practices

Wisconsin's community spirit plus high quality and culturally competent services have helped the Hmong currently living here rapidly achieve success. With nearly 47,000 current Hmong residents, Wisconsin has the third largest Hmong population in the United States, following California and Minnesota, and is one of the most successful. Wisconsin's Hmong families reported \$36,000 in median household income in the 2000 Census, compared to \$24,000 for Hmong families in California. Hmong home ownership rates in Wisconsin exceed 50%.

One of the reasons that refugees reach self-sufficiency in Wisconsin is a combination of the efforts of the W-2 program and the Key States Initiative (KSI) employment model. KSI operated as a distinct program from 1988-1998, and has now been incorporated into ongoing refugee employment programs. This program was very successful in gaining self-sufficiency for the current Hmong, reducing welfare dependency from a 73% in 1987 to less than 2% currently. The key elements to help refugees reach self-sufficiency include:

- Accountability for Welfare Grant Terminations and Grant Reductions.
 - ❑ Bilingual job development and post-placement follow-up.
 - ❑ Working with Multiple Wage Earners (MWE) in each family and increased services to women
- Involvement of Mutual Assistance Association (MAA) Boards and refugee and community leaders.
 - ❑ There are ten Mutual Assistance Associations that provide employment and training services, and varying levels of services to youth, victims of violence, elderly, and those with mental health problems.
 - ❑ The MAA's are also able to work with the Hmong leadership and family structures in a way that few other agencies can. While this network has been severely strained by very substantial cuts in funding, all of these agencies have been able to maintain bilingual staffing.
- Family-Focused Case Management
 - ❑ Motivational Training/Short-term Counseling
 - ❑ Vocational English-as-a-Second Language Training (VESL) and 'Survival' ESL Training for families
- Linkages between Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Job Centers/W-2 Services
 - ❑ Refugees are eligible for W-2, WIA and FSET on the same basis as other Wisconsin residents. Refugees can be enrolled in W-2, FSET, or WIA and concurrently enrolled in the refugee Social Service or Targeted Assistance programs.
 - ❑ Dual enrollment allows the refugee to efficiently access the broadest array of services to achieve rapid self-sufficiency and will often enable the W-2 agency to access the bilingual skills of the refugee case manager.
 - ❑ To assure coordination of services, it is required that the W-2 agency and the refugee employment and training agency have a signed Memorandum of Understanding with the

W-2 agency which will specify processes for referral of clients, procedures for co-case management, and roles and responsibilities of each agency.

- ❑ It is imperative that the refugee case manager and the W-2 case manager work closely to develop the family self-sufficiency plan (which the refugee agency develops for each refugee), the W-2/FSET employability plan and reach a joint resolution with the refugee to determine the plan and desired goals.
- ❑ The connections between Job Centers and ethnic CBOs has been strengthened by the Department's Faith and Community Based grant, which helped Workforce Development Boards identify, plan and partner with FBO/CBOs to deliver services to refugees and immigrants.
- ❑ The DWD has several hundred vital documents that have been translated into Hmong in order to help clients access our services. The DWD LEP website is: <http://dwdworkweb/dwd/lep/> and the Bureau of Migrant, Refugee and Labor Services website is: http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/programs/refugees/BureauWide/bilingual_materials.htm

Citizenship Training

All of the newly arriving refugee population must obtain citizenship within seven years of arrival, or they will lose eligibility for federal food stamp and SSI benefits. They will not be able to benefit from a waiver of the English test, which was available to most of the Hmong who are currently here. This means that all of the population will need case management and educational services to ensure that they complete their adjustment of status, learn English and American history and political systems, apply for naturalization and resolve any problems. Because of the very limited educational level of this population, this will require effective case management and enrollment of adults in ESL and civics classes.

For additional information or if questions, please contact

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